



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
**730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476**  
**Phone: 781-316-3000**

**webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us**

## **Dog Task Force Minutes 03/11/2010**

Fenced Off-leash Areas (OLA) Task Force

March 11, 2010

Meeting at Arlington Board of Health Conference Room  
27 Maple St., Arlington

In attendance: Task Force members Clarissa Rowe, Leslie Mayer, Adam Glick, Sue Doctrow, Liz Reisberg, Michelle Durocher, Musafa Varoglu, and Iain Miller. Also in attendance from the public was Ann Smith, Michael Quinn, BethAnn Friedman.

The meeting was addressed by Arn Franzen, Director of Somerville Parks and Recreation, who described the Somerville "dog park" or "off leash recreational facility" experience.

Arn described the Nunziato experience, which arose as a response from the mayor's office to overwhelming community demand. This 10,000 sq ft site began as a former school site, since demolished. The site was an overwhelming success, perhaps too much of a success, as it was then the only dog park in Somerville. It received excessive use from a geographically dispersed user population, and parking (which in that area is onstreet) became an issue. The site was constructed on a minimal budget, without particular attention to design, and used chain link fence and stone dust. Irrigation and drainage were later added. There were some complaints about barking and dust and even about odor, though irrigation and drainage was added to address some of these concerns. Arn's assessment of Nunziato was that, while it was a success, it would have benefitted greatly from more attention to design, as Somerville is now doing with its pending 3<sup>rd</sup> park. He also stressed several times that the community of dog owners have been very effective at self-policing, with the animal control officer available when needed. But the great need demonstrated by the use of Nunziato convinced the City that additional off leash recreational facilities were needed. In Somerville, there is a "Dog Owners' Task Force" that participates with city officials in planning off leash recreational facilities and in addressing other issues. The Task Force brings recommendations to the appropriate Alderman (men), the Mayor and then there is a public meeting.

In Somerville's second dog park, only 2500 sq ft in size, a peastone and rice stone surface was used, which is what was used in Peter's Park in Boston, but Arn wouldn't use that again because it had no advantage over stone dust, with drainage added, and owners felt the dogs didn't like running on it. **This facility is located in Ed Leathers Community park.**

Arn identified a list of elements that in his experience are important for a successful dog park:

- "Great drainage"
- Irrigation system to wet down the park several times per day for both reduction of dust and also to help with odor;
- ADA-accessible pathways;
- "Mutt mitts" and doggie bags with receptacles for disposal of waste;
- Screening or space between park and abutters;
- Permeable surface;
- Places for people too, such as benches, shade, place to gather;
- Double-gate vestibule so that dogs don't run out when a person opens the gate;

Arn mentioned several times that you don't necessarily have to include all of these elements, but he stressed the importance of making it a visually appealing place, since it is for people as well as dogs. He suggested the use of vegetation to soften the look. A dog park without plantings can look too severe; which he likened to the "exercise lot in a jail yard."

In response to a question about maintenance, Arn said that Somerville DPW picks up daily from both off leash facilities, in accordance with their normal park maintenance schedule.

One additional element that the group discussed is whether or not water fountains, both human and canine, are necessary. Arn believes they are important, but fountains have been a maintenance problem in Arlington Parks. They are the target of vandalism and are very difficult to keep operational.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> off leash recreational facility is under design and will be 20,000 sq ft in size on New Washington St, East Somerville. **This is a new construction park and in addition to a dog park, it will include a community area.** This park, including the large off leash facility, will benefit from full attention to design, and will cost an estimated \$600k (includes design), all City funded. Cost arises from the use of an environmental audit, paving and ADA compliance from a former industrial site, and full attention to design. The off leash recreation area will include a cupola for shade, an obstacle course of dog agility equipment, benches, plantings around the entire perimeter, lighting, water, irrigation and drainage. Essentially, this will be a state of the art facility. The park is in a block-grant eligible area, so funding is coming from that source. Arn feels strongly that attention to aesthetics is very important. He believes support will flow from an attractive and well run facility. However, he agreed that simpler measures than those planned for this new park can be taken to address aesthetics. For example, he suggested keeping fence heights to 4 ft, which are regarded as being high enough, and to have plantings around the outside of the fence, especially where facing abutters' homes.

Two more off leash recreational areas are also under consideration in Somerville. Arn believes that \$28/sq ft is the approximate cost for a well-designed facility, suggesting a \$280k budget for a 10,000 sq ft park. He believes that 10,000 sq ft is an ideal size for an off leash recreational facility. He said, though, that it should be possible to have a "trial balloon" beginning with a simpler design, as long as there was not too much scrimping. In response to a question, he said it should be possible to begin with basic amenities (fence, surface with irrigation and drainage), and add other features later. He did not recall the cost of Nunziato, but should be able to help us to get that information. He said that, if he could have done it differently, Nunziato would have been set back a little further, leaving room for some vegetation around the outside of the fencing. Nonetheless, the success of Nunziato was what led to the decision to follow it with four more potential areas (one already in use, one in design, and two under consideration).

Arn concluded by urging us to follow up with him if we have any more questions. (He had provided business cards to all Task Force members.)

The Fenced OLA Task Force decided to meet again on Wednesday April 7 at 6:00pm in the Senior Center.